

AMBER ALERT WEB PORTAL PILOT PROJECT

A powerful exchange of information between law enforcement, the media and the public.

SYNOPSIS

The AMBER Alert Situation

The Washington State Patrol, the Washington State Association of Broadcasters, the Washington Military Department Emergency Management Division, the Washington State Department of Transportation and local law enforcement agencies created an AMBER Alert program nearly a year ago. Washington's system is operational and effective, but there are important ways that it can be improved to increase the probability of recovering an abducted child. We have identified several needs to be addressed now that the basic AMBER Alert System is in place.

- Once the AMBER Alert message is broadcast over the Emergency Alert System (EAS), there is no single, universal source for broadcasters or the public to obtain additional information.
- Local law enforcement agencies are not empowered to add information, update and or cancel alerts in real-time from their community and get this real-time information to the media and public.
- Handling AMBER Alert inquiries requires intensive efforts for AMBER Alert agencies and it creates huge workload spikes for Public Information Officers.
- There is little or no funding for the establishment of a Web site or other resource to satisfy these needs.

Opportunity

Washington State has researched and extended a partnership offer to Engaging & Empowering Citizenship (E2C) to initiate a pilot project that applies state-of-the-art, real-time Web portal capabilities to existing AMBER Alert programs using an innovative low-cost business model. This pilot project is a cooperative effort between the Washington State Department of Information Services (DIS), existing partners in Washington's AMBER Alert Plan, and other states, organizations and corporate sponsors. The partners plan to roll out an AMBER Alert Web Portal Pilot within 90 days and conduct tests.

The AMBER Alert Web Portal Pilot Project and Innovative Business Model

Following an AMBER Alert activation, law enforcement agencies will be able post up-to-date information about an abducted child to a single AMBER Alert Web Portal. Media, law enforcement and the public can access this one Web portal to obtain current AMBER Alert information for their local area or extended area(s) and find descriptive information to help recover the abducted child.

Consumers will be able to subscribe to alerts and status updates via e-mail, fax, phone or other Web portal notification methods such as paging and PDA alerts. Many private businesses, organizations, individuals and neighborhood groups have expressed interest in receiving AMBER Alert information. Content

contributors and consumers use the Web portal at no cost because public and or corporate sponsors cover recurring operational costs. Corporate sponsorships currently cover the operational costs of E2C's Earth 911 Web site.

Strategic Partnership

Through forming a strategic partnership, Washington State wants to conduct an AMBER Alert Web Portal Pilot Project to assess how well the Earth 911 business model and technology platform would support a statewide, and if successful, a nationwide AMBER Alert system. Based on results, the vision is that the model could be used for other government uses as well (e.g., flood warnings, earthquakes, tsunamis, chemical warfare alerts, health alerts, missing children and adults, most wanted, sexual offender locaters, etc.), i.e., an America's 911.

Earth 911 has partnered with government for over 12 years and, as such, Earth 911 has earned substantial credibility and rapport with state, local and federal governments. E2C / Earth 911 has recently been appointed by the federal government to apply their business and technology models to a national "Recreation 411" operation and to implement the vision of an "Americas 911" concept. Through E2C / Earth 911, the state of Washington and the other states that participate in the prototype have far greater potential to develop a foundation for a national AMBER Alert system. Federal Department of Justice, OMB and the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children will be solicited for input from the onset of this project.

Business Reasons To Invest

- What is so unique and compelling about this project is that it would allow states and local law enforcement agencies (by the thousands) to contribute up-to-date AMBER information to a single Web portal providing a common look and feel.
- Constituents and interested parties can access one Web portal to obtain current information in visual, text or audio form for their local area or extended area(s) to help recover an abducted child.
- Content contributors and consumers use the Web portal at no cost because public and / or corporate sponsors cover recurring operational costs.
- Any law enforcement agency will have a powerful capability to provide AMBER Alert information and updates to a local area or escalate to statewide or national levels. Jurisdictions currently without an AMBER Alert plan can readily utilize all the capabilities of the AMBER Alert portal.
- Law enforcement agencies will be able to convey critical AMBER Alert information to the public in a consistent manner. They could also share this information with other jurisdictions and states automatically in a consistent recognizable format.
- The Web portal would provide critical information to those who are part of the Emergency Alert System (EAS), and most important, to the public and private organizations that are not.
- Broadcasters will have access to information that needs to be quickly re-broadcast in accordance with the state and local AMBER Alert Plans.
- It enables each broadcaster to publish the AMBER Alert Web Portal content through their own Web site to attract visitors and maintain their own identity or brand.
- It enables each state, city or private organization to publish the AMBER Alert Web Portal content through their own Web site to attract visitors and maintain their own identity or brand.

- It will coordinate with local AMBER Alert Web sites through electronic data exchange.
- It utilizes a Geographic Information System to select the radius of alerts and notifies law enforcement, media and public subscribers within the selected area(s). It provides map-based information searches, and conveys location-based information to the public.

More states, organizations and corporate sponsors are joining this strategic partnership to build a strong AMBER Alert Web Portal. The multi-state partnership with national level public and/or corporate sponsorship enhances the likelihood that the AMBER Alert Web Portal can become a national model. The AMBER Alert Web Portal will promote a powerful exchange of information between law enforcement, the media and the public.

For more information on the pilot project, visit the AMBER Alert pilot project Web page on the DIS Web site, at <http://www.wa.gov/dis/AMBERalertpilot/>.

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